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### Community In The Making: Lincoln Center Institute, The Arts And Teacher Education (The Series on School Reform) by Maxine Greene (Foreword), Madeleine Fuchs Holzer (Editor), Scott Noppe-Brandon (Editor)

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## BOOK REVIEW

**A Review of *Community in the making: Lincoln Center Institute, the arts, and teacher education***, eds. Holzer, M.F. and Noppe-Brandon (New York: Teachers College Press, 2005)

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*For us, education signifies an initiation into new ways of seeing, hearing, feeling, moving. It signifies the nurture of a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, a reaching out for meanings, a learning to learn... (aesthetic education) is part of the human effort to seek a greater coherence in the world... an effort to move individuals to seek a grounding for themselves, so that they may break through the "cotton wool" of dailyness and passivity and boredom and come awake to the colored, sounding, problematic world.*" (Greene, 2001, p.7)

Over her years of service to the education community, Maxine Greene has given us a greater understanding of how perceptive encounters with the arts can enliven our democracy and awaken and move people to see, to hear, to feel, and to engage in their world in often unexpected and productive ways. The essays in *Community in the Making: Lincoln Center Institute, the Arts, and Teacher Education* describe how, over the course of ten years, eight colleges and universities of teacher education embraced Greene's philosophy of aesthetic education and designed rich partnerships with teaching artists from the Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) to improve teacher education.

As philosopher-in-residence at the Lincoln Center Institute for over thirty years, Greene articulated "aesthetic education" as a transactional process between a creator's artistic choices and viewer's aesthetic response. Unlike traditional visions of arts education, aesthetic education is not focused on art for art's sake or using the arts as a mechanism to teach other subjects. Rather, aesthetic education is a third process that emphasizes the development of new connections through the act of experience and emphasizes encounters with the arts and the continuous interactions between the viewer and the artwork. The act of engaging in aesthetic education is an intentional undertaking that is designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts (Greene, 2001). Greene's philosophy of aesthetic education extends John Dewey's description of the dynamic between making and viewing art (Dewey, 1934) and the transactional reader response theory of Louise Rosenblatt (Rosenblatt, 1978): There is a reciprocal, constructive, transactional, mutually defining, and evolving dynamic between making art and perceiving it.

*Community in the Making* provides accounts of teacher educators, preservice teachers, and LCI teaching artists as they journeyed to embrace Greene's vision of aesthetic education through the day-to-day work of teacher education. The essays include descriptions of the partners' arts-based projects, interviews with participants (faculty, teaching artists, and teacher education students), and conversations among participants about their learning and the changes in their understandings over time. Several authors highlight the unexpected and often surprising outcomes when Colleges of Education crossed boundaries and partnered with teaching artists from the LCI and arts institutions. The authors describe how looking deeply at, for example, the plays of Anna Deavere Smith, the visual work of artist Mark Rothko, sculptures erected in New York's Socrates Sculpture Park, and Mozart's operas transformed the way they thought about and visualized their work as educators. The student and faculty participants are frequently described as experiencing a healthy disequilibrium as they moved outside the confines of their college classrooms to deep encounters with the arts.

In the process of sharing the stories of their collaborations, the authors rearticulate the goals of teacher education to embrace and advocate for the ambiguities and uncertainties fostered by engagements with the principles of aesthetic education. Jerrold Ross, Dean of the School of Education at St. John's University, suggests a need to move beyond a culture of "academic aesthetes" in teacher education, whose sole focus is on the pragmatic, to explore how the arts can depict the issues of most immediate concern to us; issues such as the environment, war and peace, human rights, and human dignity. He provides a rallying call to outfit a "new army" of teachers, principals, and superintendents; a call to arms subscribing to the right of children to be "transformed through the arts, becoming individuals of worth within the global community we all inhabit and must learn to revere" (p. 32).

Philip Anderson's playful essay departs refreshingly from a more formal academic discourse and embraces a "fish tale" storytelling aesthetic to tell the tale of the Queens College portion of the Lincoln Center Institute/Teacher Education Collaborative. He explores the dynamic between learning about and through the arts and describes his journey of moving

from the “experience of art” to the use of aesthetic experience as a form of cognition when teaching the academic disciplines. He shares how partnership participants learned about the importance of aesthetic experience, particularly when responding to disciplinary academic content such as history. Rather than seeking the “cold, hard facts,” the goals of an “aesthetic rationality-focused classroom” focuses on the multiple possibilities for response to a metaphor and a range of meanings (including contradictory elements) embedded in the metaphor (p. 39). This approach actively seeks to explore tensions rather than serve a need to find the one, right answer.

Sandra DeMinco, in her contribution to the collection, articulates a helpful taxonomy of three learning outcomes that she and her teacher education students experienced through their visual inquiry of artworks at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA): (a) arts-based, (b) arts-related, and (c) ancillary learning outcomes. Arts-based learning outcomes happen when the participants respond directly to an art by simply describing what they see or hear in a work of art and what they feel and think about it. Arts-related learning outcomes surface when viewers notice aesthetic features in artwork and how artists do not work haphazardly, but rather follow forms and structure to convey perceptions of their culture and time. Ancillary learning outcomes happen when arts-based and arts-related experiences facilitated a transfer of perception, creation, or comprehension skills from one art to another – transferring, for example, an understanding of form in a painting to form in poetry.

Helen Johnson and Jamie Lew describe how their teacher education students deconstructed works of art by visual artists such as Willem DeKooning, Jacob Lawrence, and Mark Rothko through personal reactions, analyses of the work, reflections on their perceptions, and their analyses of the artists’ intent. Because this work was done in a social space, the multiple interpretations and perspectives showed how the artworks, and disciplinary knowledge, are *both* relational and constructed. The act of approaching art in these personally relevant and interpretive ways helped participants build relationships across disciplines, better understand the disciplinary “lenses” they value and promote, and allowed the participants to see their own disciplines in new ways that would have been impossible without the infusion of such aesthetic experiences.

Two of the essays move beyond descriptions of the partnership projects to their direct implications for classroom teaching. Rikki Asher and Arthur Costigan explore an ongoing conversation with preservice teachers about the ways in which aesthetic encounters with sculpture and visual art can be synthesized acts of aesthetic interpretation and brought into their classrooms. The acts of observing, negotiating, and articulating interpretations of artworks are linked directly to teachers’ ability to approach understanding the thinking of their students. Alene Smith describes a renaissance of storytelling in public schools in its description of the partnership with the LCI storyteller, Tommy Scott Young, and the responsibilities of teachers to re-surface lost cultural voices, like those represented in the stories of B’rer Rabbit.

In her essay, Linda Louis notes that the arts should be regarded and promoted as learning methodologies. She notes that students need to “write their own plays, choreograph their own dances, and paint their own portraits” as well as respond to and appreciate the artwork of others (p. 173). She also suggests that preservice teachers need time to contemplate works of art by considering their personal responses in terms of how meaning is constructed in the arts disciplines and the time when the art was created, and to think about how their insights can be translated into teaching strategies in their classrooms.

Throughout the essays, the emphasis is on how the partners translated the goals of aesthetic education to their ongoing work, often during a time when the arts are relegated to a marginalized position in teacher education and public school institutions. Several of the essays point to the challenges of undertaking a large, multi-campus partnership program due to the differences in institutional cultures. As a remedy, the authors frequently offer practical rubrics that will guide those who are interested in similar cross-institutional partnerships through some of the challenges that come with the different norms of practice that surface when two very different kinds of institutions partner to promote aesthetic education.

As in many academic writings about the place of the arts in education, this collection is somewhat challenged in the act of translation. Writing about the positive outcomes of profound transactions with the arts and teaching artists is not the same as experiencing them. At times, the reader is left with powerful notions of *why* aesthetic education is crucial, yet it is sometimes difficult to interpret *what* actually happened as participants learned about and through the arts. A strong sense of advocacy permeates the essays, but understanding the collaborations from the inside out is sometimes difficult without the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic representations that are unique to the arts and frequently absent from academic writing. At the same time, the essayists’ descriptions provide sufficiently vivid descriptions of their projects and learning to tantalize teacher educators to reconsider how the tenets of aesthetic education and rich engagements with the arts might shake up their work for the better.

What are the essential skills, knowledge, and dispositions that teachers need to facilitate their students' engagement in their world? As a teacher educator, I return to this question again and again. Too often, my colleagues and I retreat to our specific and disparate disciplinary "corners" without exploring the liberating potential of the arts to re-imagine this question. Our colleges of education and schools, therefore, tend to change very little, and the day-to-day work in classrooms can embrace a deadly tedium rather than a vision of possibility. The essays in this collection provide a needed rallying cry to re-embrace arts and aesthetic education for their unique value beyond facilitating the understanding of subject matter content. Moreover, in the words of Dr. Greene, such collaborations offer examples of how the arts can "suggest, inform, provoke, inspire, and, (in the deepest sense), educate" (Holzer & Noppe-Brandon, 2005, p. ii).

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